

Remarks

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3-7, 9-13 and 16-19 are pending in the present application. Claim 13 has been amended and claims 14 and 15 have been cancelled by the present Amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, the Abstract was objected to; claims 13, 14 and 16-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Nakagawa in view of Howe; claims 1, 3-7 and 9-12 were allowed; and claim 15 was indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter. In light of this indication, independent claim 13 has been amended to include the subject matter recited in dependent claims 14 and 15. Accordingly, the pending claims are allowable and the rejection noted in the Office Action is moot.

Further, the Abstract has been amended in light of the comments noted in the Office Action. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested the objection to the Abstract be withdrawn.

In addition, it is respectfully requested this Amendment be entered as it is believed no new issues have been raised. That is, this Amendment places the application in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons and in view of the above clarifying amendments, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw all of the rejections of record, and to provide an early issuance of a Notice of Allowance.

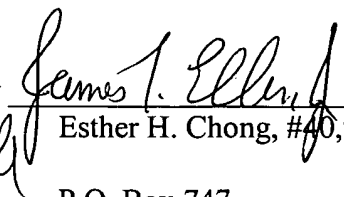
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact David A. Bilodeau, Reg. No. 42,325, (703) 205-8072, at the offices of Birch, Stewart, Kolasch & Birch, LLP, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and further replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: September 5, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASH & BIRCH, LLP

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